

AT ODDS WITH THE REGENT

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A Story of the Cellamare Conspiracy by Burton Egbert Stevenson

CHAPTER XX—(Continued.)

"Are you sure that you are strong enough to undertake this expedition?" asked Richelleu, as we arose from table.

I laughed at him. "You shall see if it comes to a question of using our swords," I said. And then I remembered the bandage and my hand went to my head. "I cannot wear this ridiculous thing, I must remove it," and I started to do so.

"Not for a moment!" cried the duke, springing to my side and seizing my hands. "Who can tell what hurt it would do you? Leave it there, Jean, or I swear I shall not go a step outside this house tonight."

"But," I stopped. I could not tell him that it was fear of Louise's laughing eyes which moved me. Richelleu understood in an instant. "It is an honorable wound," he said, "received in an honorable cause. Why seek to hide it? It is the slight of wounds like that which moves a woman's heart. They will find your pale, bandaged head very interesting, Jean, believe me."

And so I left the bandage where it was. Nine o'clock came, the carriage was waiting, we entered it, and drove by a circuitous route to the back of the Palais Royal gardens. Here we left it, and instructed the coachman to drive slowly up and down until he should be called. That done, I led the way under the shade of the chestnuts towards the palace. Richelleu asked no questions, but I could see he was pale with anxiety. We mounted the low wall enclosing the little park which we had entered once before under the guidance of Mlle. Dacour, dropped down on the other side, and turned to the right.

"Ah, ah," whispered Richelleu, "I begin to see. You hope to gain entrance by the secret staircase. But can you find the spring?"

"I answered, in the same low tone. "I was watching Mlle. Dacour closely when she opened the door for us, and I know about where it is." As I spoke I felt along the wall, but my fingers detected nothing. "It was near here," I said. "I am sure, for I could feel his hand on my arm trembling with suspense. Again I ran my hand over the wall, pressing gently on two or three small irregularities, but without result. "Come, I will try again," and a third time I examined the wall. This time more carefully and over a larger area. "Ah, I have it!" I exclaimed as I felt a yielding under my fingers, and the door swung inward.

"It was time," said Richelleu, for as we entered another door near by opened, and hurrying feet passed along the wall, even as we pushed the door shut after us. We were in intense darkness, but I knew the way, and guiding myself by the wall, turned without hesitation towards the narrow hallway, Richelleu following close behind, his hand in mine. We found the hallway without difficulty and passed along it cautiously until we reached the end, and slowly felt our way up the little winding staircase there. The wooden wall which formed the back of the presbytery closet stopped us. "Wait a moment," whispered Richelleu, as I began to feel for the spring, whose approximate position I had also seen. "Does Charlotte know of this visit?"

"No," I answered; "I had no opportunity to tell her of it, else I doubt not she would have sent some one to guide us and so saved us all this trouble." "But," Richelleu objected, "perhaps she will not be alone; perhaps she will resent an intrusion of this kind."

"Very well," I answered, losing patience a little at this unexpected wavering, which was so unlike the duke, "we can yet turn back, open the door, return to the carriage, drive to your hotel, and secure a good night's rest before attending the wedding tomorrow morning."

"Forgive me, de Brancas," said Richelleu, after a moment. "I am so unstrung I scarce know what I am saying. Open the door if you can find the spring."

I felt along the boards for two or three minutes without result. It doubtless seemed an age to Richelleu, and I could hear him breathing unevenly and shutting his feet behind me. "For God's sake," de Brancas, he said at last, in a strained whisper, "make haste! This is more than I can bear."

I felt myself beginning to tremble in sympathy with him, and pulled myself up with a jerk, recognizing the fact that it was a necessity necessary for one of us to keep his head.

"A little patience," I whispered; "this spring is more difficult to find than the other, and it is so devilishly dark here." Again I ran my hand up and down the wall. It was made of narrow boards fitted closely together. Back and forth I passed my hand over it, and just as I was beginning to despair I felt a slight inequality. I pressed it and the door opened against us. We stepped back out of the way, and in a moment were in the closet. The door shut behind us of its own accord.

The door which opened from the closet into the room beyond was not lightly closed, and through this opening we could make a partial survey of the room. It was empty in so far as we could see, and I was about to suggest that we make a cautious scrutiny of the remainder of it, when a sound as of stifled sobbing startled me.

"What is that?" I whispered. "My God, do you not know what it is?" exclaimed Richelleu. "It is Charlotte—Charlotte weeping over her coming sacrifice. Stay here, my friend," and before I could do aught to prevent him he had opened the door, stepped through it, and closed it behind him. I heard a startled exclamation from the princess, and at the same instant another sound which sent a cold shiver down my back. Some one was ascending the spiral staircase with assured and regular tread. The footsteps passed for a moment without the door, then there came a click, a breath of air, and a small as of a candle newly extinguished. I drew back into one corner of the closet, and as I did so this unknown person stepped into it and closed the secret door behind him.

CHAPTER XXI.

WHERE HONOR WINS. I pressed more closely into my corner and held my breath in suspense, fearing lest even the beating of my heart would betray my presence. The new comer paused for a moment to set down the lantern, and in that moment the voice of Richelleu penetrated to the closet. "You are surprised to see me, Charlotte?" he was saying. "Did you think for an instant that I would permit you to be delivered to this fate

which has been prepared for you?" "Oh, M. le Duc!" cried the voice of the princess, broken by sobs. "I do but save you from one danger to find you braving another. You do not comprehend my father's hatred. Go, I beseech you, before it is too late."

"Yes, I shall go in a moment, Charlotte," answered Richelleu, in a milder tone, "and you are going with me. At the back of the gardens there is a carriage waiting, with four of the fastest horses in the kingdom. In an hour we shall be far from Paris. Another day will find us safe in the Netherlands and free to live our lives together."

"There was a moment's silence, and I could hear the deep, agitated breathing of the person who stood beside me. My hands began to tremble under the strain, and I clasped them behind me to keep them still. An increasing giddiness reminded me of my wound. The closet was insufferably close, and my face grew wet with perspiration as I realized my weakness.

"And whose plan is this?" asked Mlle. de Valois, at last. "I do not know," I answered, "but I believe it is only one man—the one who found a way out of the Bastille—who has stood between me and danger a dozen times—who even at this moment is awaiting me in the closet there."

I crouched for a spring, expecting an instant attack from my companion in the closet, and determined to throttle him at any cost before an alarm could be given. Even as I steeled myself for the struggle I heard a startled exclamation at my side. "Are you indeed here, M. de Brancas?" whispered a sweet voice.

"Louise, oh, Louise! Is it you?" I cried, forgetting caution in the joy and great reaction of this discovery, and I stretched out my arms and drew her to me. "I was just about to spring upon you to prevent your escape," I added, laughing out of the sheer rapture of my heart.

She did not resist my arms, but, with a long sigh, laid her head upon my breast. My blood was surging in my ears as I stooped and kissed her hair, and I felt that she was sobbing.

"What is it, my love?" I whispered. "Oh, you do not know?" she sobbed. "Surely you have heard of the wedding tomorrow?"

"Yes," I answered, "but that wedding will never take place. By tomorrow Richelleu and Mlle. de Valois will be far from here, speeding towards the north of France." "I wish so with all my heart," and Louise drew back a little, "but it will never be, M. de Brancas."

"What never be?" I cried. "But I tell you that everything is prepared, that all that remains to be done is for them to descend, enter the carriage and give the word to the driver." "And that is just what Charlotte d'Orleans will never do," she said, her voice was sad, it had a certain pride and dignity.

I was too astonished to reply. "M. de Brancas," she continued, "I know her better than do you, far better even than Richelleu. A woman has her ideals no less than a man. But listen, she herself is telling him."

In the tumult of my own emotion I had no longer heeded what was happening in the outer room, but at this moment I heard Richelleu's voice raised in impatient protest. "What do you say, mademoiselle," he cried, "that you will not go with me? And why, may I ask? Is it that you no longer love me?"

"M. le Duc," answered the clear voice of the princess, who seemed to have recovered her composure. "It appears to me that it can no longer be a question of my love, since to save your head I have agreed to this hateful marriage. The reason is, monsieur, that I have given my word to my father, and I do not choose to break it. He might have distrusted me; he might have insisted that this marriage take place before you were released, and I should have consented without an instant's hesitation, because I should have known that he would keep faith with me. But he chose to trust me; you were free again an hour after I had given him my word. It is to his generosity you owe your presence here tonight, monsieur. My sacrifice may be the greater, but I do not choose to fall below my father's."

Richelleu remained for a moment speechless. I felt the tears starting to my eyes. "That is grand; that is noble," I murmured.

Louise answered by a pressure of the hand, and I knew that she also was affected no less than I.

It was Richelleu who broke the silence. "Give me a moment for thought, mademoiselle," he said, and he heard him pacing up and down the room. "As for me, I felt a great reverence for this woman spring to life in my heart. As I had told Madame du Maine, a woman may do anything but break her word; no woman can do that with honor, no more than a man, and my heart trembled with emotion as I heard the princess take the same high ground—with her so far above anything of which I had conceived. I prayed that Richelleu might not fall below her. Louise was crying softly."

"Charlotte," said Richelleu, at last, "you are tearing my heart to pieces, and yet I would not have you other than you are. I was a fool to think you would consent. But," he continued, in a clearer voice, "I have given no promise, my honor is not engaged, I have already refused to accept this sacrifice. What is there to prevent my taking you up in my arms, opening the door of your closet, and with de Brancas my back running with you to the carriage and starting for the frontier?"

Again there was a moment's silence. "Ah, no, no," she cried, at last. "Do not tempt me further, Louis. What I am doing is for my own honor and for France. My father has told me that France demands it—that it will strengthen his empire. If you knew how hard it is—how I turn with loathing from the task I have to do—you would not seek to make it harder."

"De Brancas," called Richelleu, "come here, my friend." I flung the door open and stepped into the room. Mlle. de Valois was half sitting, half lying in a large chair, her face white with suffering, her eyes luminous with a great glory. Richelleu himself was scarcely less affected. He glanced at Louise, who had come from the closet with me and who was kneeling at the side of the princess. "Good," he exclaimed. "I am glad to see that you are here, Mlle. Dacour. Charlotte will need a companion. Will you not accompany her?"

"I had intended doing so, M. le Duc," answered Louise, gently, "whenever she went north or south." "No," said Louise, "and Richelleu bowed to her with that courtly grace which

so well became him. "M. de Brancas and myself had already considered this contingency and he is to join us at Brussels in a week's time."

I glanced at Louise to see how she received this announcement, but seemingly she had not heard it. "And now, de Brancas," continued the duke, turning to me, "we must make haste. We have already remained here much too long."

"True," I answered. "It is your purpose, then, to forcibly carry away Mlle. de Valois?"

"Since she refuses to accompany me, yes," and Richelleu looked me in the eyes. "Have you any other course to advise, my friend?"

I paused irresolute, glancing from one to the other. I could not choose but speak, whatever the cost might be. "If love were the only thing; if there were no heights of honor before which love must bow, I could not go on. Let these two hearts settle the future for themselves. 'M. le Duc,' I said, in a firmer voice, "it is not for me to give advice. I will do whatever you command."

Again Richelleu walked the length of the room, his twitching face telling of the conflict raging in his breast. I went to the window and gazed out upon the night. Louise was sobbing. Only the princess remained composed. "I pray heaven that my heart may never again be torn as it was in that moment."

"M. le Duc," she said, in the same calm tone she had used before, "listen to the voice of your friend and to my voice, which, I am sure, finds an answering chord in your heart. If love were the only thing I would go out with you gladly, but honor must ever weigh love in the hearts of all true gentlemen. Tell me, Louis, I have not been deceived in you—that you merit honor more than love."

Richelleu threw himself at her feet with a sob and caught her hand. I knew he had won the battle. "Forgive me, Charlotte," he whispered, in a choking voice; "I have played the coward, not the man. Let me be as you say, your honor and mine before all else."

And at these words my heart went out to him, and I knew that these two loved each other with a love in which there was no taint of selfishness. Years, perhaps, would dull the sting of the wound, but for them, life would hold few sweeter memories than that of this sacred moment. I could not trust myself to turn from the window. The lights without were blurred with my tears and in my heart was a great tenderness.

The princess was the strongest of us all. "You must go, my friend," she said, at last. "My friend I shall always deem you—my nearest and dearest friend—who stood true to me in the bitter hour of my life. Do you see any sorrow there? Sorrow there may have been—sorrow there may be again—but now it is swallowed up by joy and pride in you."

I turned to look at them. It must have been with faint, avowed gladness that martyrs went to the stake—yes, Christ to His cross. Her arms were around his neck, and she bent her head and kissed him. "It is the last," she said—"the last I shall willingly give," and she gently loosed his hands, arose, and stood from him.

"We, also, must say goodbye," said a low voice at my elbow, and I turned with a start to see Louise standing there. "You, too, are going?" I cried, with a great fear at my heart.

"Yes, it is settled," and she was looking into my eyes. "My place is at her side. But my sacrifice, my friend, is much less than hers. I am leaving, perhaps, people whom I love, but there is no sorrow in the end of the path such as yawns before Charlotte."

"No," I answered, "no," but I could say no more. "And believe me, M. de Brancas," she continued, placing both her hands in mine, "not that you have ever done—no—even that bandage about your head which tells of a wound so nobly won—has pleased me as did the words you said to Richelleu. I read your heart, and I saw nothing there but loyalty and truth."

"I go into her eyes, which she did not seek to turn from mine, trembling in every limb—trembling too much to speak. "You may kiss me," she whispered, and I bent and kissed her on the lips. "Now go, for that he you have ever done for the knightly spirit you have shown tonight. Oh, do not seek to hide the tears. I could not love a man who had not a tender heart."

She pushed me gently from her. I turned to find that Richelleu had also risen, and was waiting for me. "Come, my friend," he said, "let us go," but he did not take his eyes from the princess, who was standing, pale, lovely, with the air of a general who has fallen mortally wounded at the moment of victory.

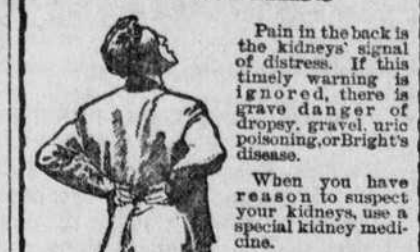
I went to her and knelt as at a shrine. "Mademoiselle," I said, "I cannot hope to tell you how great a reverence you have inspired in my heart tonight, but I trust that if you are ever in need of a sword and a loyal heart you will remember me. I can think of no greater honor than that of serving you."

(Continued Next Week.)

Olla-Podrida.
From the Dietetic and Hygienic Gazette. In the article contributed to the Dietetic and Hygienic Gazette by Lewis Dayton Burdick, under the title "Olla-Podrida," are some itemized bills for professional services of physicians in the same family during the years from 1796 to 1809, rendered in Rhode Island and central New York. Also a list of ingredients and quantities of each, prepared by the founder of the Thomsonian School of Medicine, forming a sufficient supply to cure any disease which any family of common size will be likely to be afflicted with during one year; and a brief account of the discovery of Dr. John Thomson of a new cure for consumption by soaking the patient's feet in soup, and the practice of this treatment in Albany, Buffalo and Poughkeepsie in 1847. The article also deals with another little treatise on medicine belonging to this period, published in 1833, and republished at Utica, N. Y., by Jared Doollittle in 1861, and still occasionally met with in family collections. Through purporting to be botanical, many of its prescriptions recall old beliefs in the magic of odd numbers and the doctrine of signatures, both prominent in primitive medicine. In the signature remedies are noted walnut meats for brain troubles and poison, yellow blossomed plants red cow's urine for jaundice, and a live bullfrog baked in a pound of fresh butter as the best cure of a wen. Probably with this class of cures must be placed also the cure of an oblique burn by applying a burnt and powdered inner shoe sole, the sensation of the pain from the burn suggesting that of too vigorous application of a leather strap or slipper to the skin.

Paddles invented by a Wisconsin man, to be strapped to the hands to aid a swimmer, fold in when the arm is pushed forward to lessen the resistance, but cannot stick together to thwart their intended purpose.

BACKACHE A SIGNAL OF DISTRESS



Pain in the back is the kidneys' signal of distress. If this timely warning is ignored, there is grave danger of dropsy, gravel, uric poisoning, or Bright's disease.

When you have reason to suspect your kidneys, use a special kidney medicine.

Doan's Kidney Pills relieve weak, congested kidneys—cure backache—regulate the urine. Good proof in the following statement.

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Dr. H. Green, 215 N. 9th Street, North Yakima, Wash., says: "I have used Doan's Kidney Pills in my practice for years and they have given me satisfaction. I have taken Doan's Kidney Pills personally and pronounce them the best remedy I have prescribed in my long career as a physician and surgeon."

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FROM A SAFE DISTANCE.



Mrs. Bridges—How long were you in your last place? Applicant—Two weeks. Mr. Bridges (from adjoining room)—Mary, ask the lady what delayed her.

Means to Enjoy Closing Years.
Having made a million dollars by the practice of law since he quit politics, former Congressman and Governor Frank S. Black, aged fifty-eight, has confirmed the reports that he has retired. "After a certain point is reached it isn't money a man should work for, but time. You can't defy human nature," he says.

Sure Does.
"The pen is mightier than the sword."
"But the typewriter puts it all over the pen."

When Your Eyes Need Care
Try Murine Eye Remedy. No Smarting—Feels Fine—Acts Quickly. Try it for Red, Watery Eyes and Granulated Eyelids. Illustrated Book in each Package. Murine is compounded by our Ophthalmologist—Practice for many years. Now dedicated to the Public and sold by Druggists at 25c and 50c per bottle. **Murine Eye Remedy Co., Chicago**

Candid Admission.
"What are your ideas about reform?"
"About the same as everybody's," replied Senator Sorghum. "I have a general impression that myself and my personal and political friends are the only people who do not need it."

Gallant Blind Man.
"Ah, you're a pretty lady."
"What's that? I thought you were blind."
"In a sense only. I never see the ugly women."—Journal Amusant.

A pretty girl never approves of men who flirt with other girls.

The Paxton Toilet Co. of Boston, Mass., will send a large trial box of Paxtine Antiseptic, a delightful cleansing and germicidal toilet preparation, to any woman, free, upon request.

At the Aviation Meet.
Mme. Vanite—Well, it certainly was not worth putting on my nice new pair of boots!—Pele Mele.

There is nothing heavenly about war.—or Dyspepsia. The world is outgrowing the first, and Garfield Tea will conquer Dyspepsia.

The commanding intellect should have the command and be king.—Schiller.

Mrs. Winslow's Soothing Syrup for Children teething, softens the gums, reduces inflammation, allays pain, cures wind colic, 25c a bottle.

Love Matches.

"Miss Marie Corelli, like all female novelists, is a firm believer in marrying for love."

The speaker, an editor of a woman's magazine, was taking tea at the Colony club in New York. She continued, a nut sandwich poised near her mouth:

"I argued and wrangled about love matches with Miss Corelli one whole day in her old-fashioned Stratford home, but she rather got the better of me at the end with an epigram: "'She who marries for love,' Miss Corelli said, 'enters heaven with her eyes shut. She who marries without love enters hell with them open.'"

Women to Wear Mantillas in Church.
Women of St. Francis De Sales Cathedral will introduce into this country the custom of wearing in church the graceful lace headdress of the Spanish women in place of hats. The innovation was suggested by Rev. Dr. O'Connor to the members of the Altar society and at the general communion of the society the scarfs will be worn.

"The hats of today have become a monstrosity," said Rev. Dr. O'Connor, addressing the society.—Toledo Correspondence Cleveland Leader.

Facetious Operator.
"I say, mister," said the cadaverous man, entering the telegraph office, "could you trust me for a telegram I want to send my wife? I'll pay you tomorrow."
"Sorry, sir," said the operator, "but we are terribly rushed these days and there isn't a tick in the office that isn't working overtime as it is."—Harper's Weekly.

His Business to Know.
Wife—Look, I bought this fur coat today. They tell me we are going to have very cold weather soon.
Husband—Who told you so?
Wife—The furrier.

ONLY ONE "BROMO QUININE."
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